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1. (Once amended) A method for managing a system that includes a plurality of devices arranged in a network, the method comprising the steps of:

gathering and storing in a centralized repository metadata that reflects configuration information about said system, and about each device of said plurality of devices, wherein said configuration information dictates a manner of operation for one or more of said plurality of devices within said network;

modifying metadata within said centralized repository to initiate configuration changes within said network; and

modifying the operation of one or more of said plurality of devices within said network by propagating said configuration changes from said centralized repository to the devices on said network to cause said configuration changes to take place.

2. (Once amended) A method for managing a system that includes a plurality of devices arranged in a network, the method comprising the steps of:

gathering and storing in a centralized repository metadata that reflects configuration information about said system, and about each device of said plurality of devices, wherein said configuration information dictates a manner of operation for one or more of said plurality of devices within said network; and

in response to a failure of the system,

recovering the centralized repository from a backup,

using the metadata within the centralized repository to configure the system, and

after the system is configured, recovering the system.

3. (Once amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of gathering and storing in a centralized repository includes gathering and storing metadata in a centralized repository that resides outside said system.

4. (Once amended) A method for managing a system that includes a plurality of devices arranged in a network, the method comprising the steps of:

gathering and storing in a centralized repository metadata that reflects configuration information about said system, and about each device of said plurality of devices, wherein said configuration information dictates a manner of operation for one or more of said plurality of devices within said network;

managing configuration of said system based upon the metadata within said centralized repository; and

in response to a failure of the system,

configuring the system based on the metadata restored in the centralized repository, and

after the system is configured, recovering the system.

5. (Once amended) A method for managing a system that includes a plurality of devices arranged in a network, the method comprising the steps of:

gathering and storing in a centralized repository metadata that reflects configuration information about said system, and about each device of said plurality of devices, wherein said configuration information dictates a manner of operation for one or more of said plurality of devices within said network; and

replicating said system by performing the steps of,

copying said metadata to a second centralized repository associated with a second system, and

configuring said second system based on the metadata contained in said second centralized repository.

6. (Once amended) A method for managing a system that includes a plurality of devices arranged in a network, the method comprising the steps of:

gathering and storing in a centralized repository metadata that reflects configuration information about said system, and about each device of said plurality of devices, wherein said configuration information dictates a manner of operation for one or more of said plurality of devices within said network; and

managing configuration of at least two of an application layer, an operating systems layer, and a hardware layer of said system based upon the metadata within said centralized repository.

7. (New) A computer readable medium carrying one or more sequences of instructions for managing a system that includes a plurality of devices arranged in a network, wherein execution of the one or more sequences of instructions by one or more processors causes the one or more processors to perform the steps of Claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.